



HELPING OUT THE TORTOISE

You may help protect the tortoise and the Natural Area by observing a few common sense rules:

- ◆ Please leave the tortoises in their home! Collecting wild tortoises is prohibited by California and Federal laws.
- ◆ Do not handle tortoises or approach them too closely. When frightened, a tortoise may lose water from its bladder — water that could otherwise have been reabsorbed into its system. Excessive water loss can cause fatal dehydration.
- ◆ Captive tortoises (pets) should not be released in the Natural Area; they may carry diseases that are hazardous to wild tortoises, and pets do not fare well in the wild.
- ◆ Dogs and cats should be kept on leashes and in the parking area only.
- ◆ Plants must not be picked or damaged; they are the tortoises' food.
- ◆ Visitors should stay on marked trails.
- ◆ Vehicle use is prohibited in the DTNA.
- ◆ Please don't litter; pack out what you packed in.
- ◆ Groups — 25+ — should contact the Ridgecrest Area Manager before visiting the DTNA.

The following vegetation list is not complete; it is designed to give you an idea of some plants present. More than 100 annuals (completing their life cycle in one growing season) and 50 perennials (present at all seasons of the year) are found in the Natural Area.

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|----------------------|------------------------|
| ◆ Bigelow coreopsis* | ◆ Thistle sage* |
| ◆ Gold-fields* | ◆ Dapple pod |
| ◆ Goldenhead | ◆ Lupines* |
| ◆ Burrobush | ◆ Primroses* |
| ◆ Cheese bush | ◆ Desert candle* |
| ◆ Desert dandelion* | ◆ Yellow pepper grass* |
| ◆ Mohave aster* | ◆ Cottonop cactus |
| ◆ Joshua tree | ◆ Golden cholla |
| ◆ Schismus grass* | ◆ Beavertail cactus |
| ◆ Indian rice grass | ◆ Desert trumpet |
| ◆ Brome grass* | ◆ Buckwheats |
| ◆ Creosote bush | ◆ Winter fat |
| ◆ Filaree* | ◆ Spiny hop sage |
| ◆ Blazing stars* | ◆ California dodder |
| ◆ Phacellas* | ◆ Desert calico* |
| ◆ Common fiddleneck* | ◆ Gilias* |
| ◆ Forget-me-nots* | |
| ◆ Anderson thornbush | |
| ◆ Peach thorn | |
| ◆ Bladder sage | |
| ◆ Paper-bag bush | |

*Annuals

The following lists are partial ones. You may see these animals at the Natural Area or evidence of their presence. Keep in mind that a large percentage of desert animals are nocturnal (active at night).

Reptiles

- ◆ Desert tortoise
- ◆ Desert iguana
- ◆ Chuckwalla
- ◆ Zebra-tailed lizard
- ◆ Leopard lizard
- ◆ Side-blotched lizard
- ◆ Desert horned lizard
- ◆ Western whiptail
- ◆ Gopher snake
- ◆ Red racer
- ◆ Glossy snake
- ◆ Sidewinder
- ◆ Mojave rattlesnake

Mammals

- ◆ Black-tailed hare (jackrabbit)
- ◆ Audubon cottontail
- ◆ Antelope ground squirrel
- ◆ Desert woodrat
- ◆ Desert kit fox
- ◆ Coyote
- ◆ Badger
- ◆ Bobcat

Birds

- ◆ Turkey vulture
- ◆ Red-tailed hawk
- ◆ Northern harrier
- ◆ Golden eagle
- ◆ Prairie falcon
- ◆ American kestrel
- ◆ Chukar
- ◆ Mourning dove
- ◆ Greater roadrunner
- ◆ Burrowing owl
- ◆ Lesser nighthawk
- ◆ Ash-throated flycatcher
- ◆ Say's phoebe
- ◆ Horned lark
- ◆ Common raven
- ◆ Northern mockingbird
- ◆ LeConte's thrasher
- ◆ Loggerhead shrike
- ◆ House finch
- ◆ Black-throated sparrow
- ◆ Sage sparrow

DESERT TORTOISE PRESERVE COMMITTEE

In 1974, a group of concerned people from governmental agencies, academic institutions, turtle and tortoise organizations, garden clubs, and conservation groups initiated the concept of protecting the tortoise populations near California City. They joined forces as the Desert Tortoise Preserve Committee. Their objective is to maintain the natural density and diversity of the plant and animal life in the area, and by working together with the BLM, this goal is being realized.

The committee has raised thousands of dollars to supplement government funds to purchase private lands. Committee members also lend their services by giving guided tours to school children, conservation group groups, and the like.

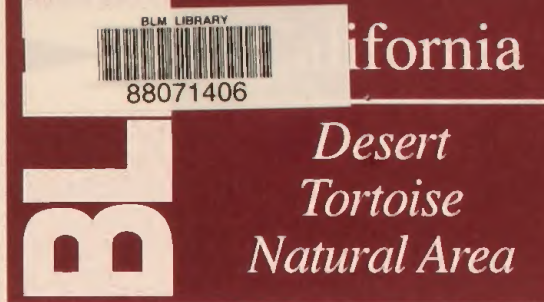
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The vast open spaces of the California Desert are uniquely situated within a few hours' drive of over 18 million people. In recognition of the special challenges created by this situation, Congress established the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) in 1976. Approximately half of the desert's 25 million acres are public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Congress directed the BLM to provide for the administration of public lands in the CDCA in a way that would protect its unusual natural and cultural values while providing for the wise use of its resources. The administrative headquarters for the CDCA is located at the BLM's California Desert District Office in Riverside. Public lands are managed for a variety of uses, including minerals, livestock grazing, wildlife, watershed, wilderness, and recreation.

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300 S. Richmond
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
(619) 375-7125

California Desert District Office
6221 Box Springs Blvd.
Riverside, CA 92507
(909) 697-5200

BLM/CA/GI-93/011+6840



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BLM closed the public land in the Natural Area to vehicle use in November 1975. A Habitat Management Plan was prepared, and about 35 miles of woven wire fence has been constructed. Public lands within the Natural Area were also closed to livestock grazing. In 1988, a new management plan for the Area of Critical Environmental Concern was completed by BLM with the assistance of the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Today, an interpretive kiosk and hiking trails lure the visitor through much of the Natural Area, where, if you're lucky, you can catch a glimpse of this fascinating creature.



THE DESERT TORTOISE

The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizi*) is the official California State Reptile. It is long-lived, slow to mature, and has a low reproductive potential. Individuals may live 60 to 100 years and may reach a length of about 15 inches. Tortoises do not mature until 14 to 20 years of age and even then eggs are not necessarily laid every year. Hatchling tortoises receive no parental care. Since their shells don't completely harden for 4 to 5 years, the young tortoises are especially vulnerable to predators.

Tortoises live in underground burrows that shelter them from the summer sun and provide a place to hibernate in the winter. These burrows are often found under perennial bushes where the root systems stabilize the burrow and the foliage provides additional shade.

Tortoises feed on annual wildflowers and grasses in the spring and sometimes again in the fall. During feeding periods, they accumulate fat and store water. These food reserves must carry the tortoises through the summer and, in some years, to the next spring.



PLANNING YOUR DTNA VISIT

The Desert Tortoise Natural Area, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, is in northeastern Kern County, 5-1/2 miles north of California City on the Randsburg-Mojave Road. It is about a 2-hour drive north from Los Angeles and 1-1/2 hours east of Bakersfield. At the Natural Area, visitors may observe the desert tortoise and other wildlife in their natural environment and learn about their habits.

Spring (mid-March to mid-June) is the best time of the year to visit the area, for temperatures then are most agreeable to animal and plant life, as well as people. Tortoises may be seen outside their burrows in the morning and late afternoon. From mid-June through February, most tortoises are usually deep in their burrows and are seldom seen.

You should bring a good supply of drinking water, as there is none at the site. Sunglasses, hat, windbreaker or sweater, and sturdy shoes or boots are recommended. Visitors may also wish to bring binoculars and a camera. Since rattlesnakes live in and around the area, watch your step.